

Notes on the South Park Ceramics

by

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The South Park site lies on a high promontory on the west side of the Cuyahoga River immediately behind the Haydite light-weight aggregate plant at Independence, Cuyahoga County, Ohio. Unaccountably, the site was overlooked by Whittlesey (1871) in his pioneer study of Cuyahoga Valley hilltop sites. Scientific excavation of a small part of the site occurred in 1930, with appearance of Emerson Greenman's site report in 1937.

During the summer of 1968, I conducted excavations at the South Park site for the Cleveland Natural Science Museum. Field notes and all material recovered were turned over to the Museum, but are now unavailable for study. Partial analysis of the recovered material was completed before leaving the Museum, however, and these results will be presented in this and other articles. The site is currently being destroyed by quarrying operations and should be completely gone within a year or two.

Excavation was confined to ten 10 X 10-foot units along a ridge trending only a few degrees east of north at the eastern edge of the bluff. The few burials known from the site were confined to this gravelly ridge so work was concentrated in the same general area in hopes of locating skeletal material, though surface indications suggested that the central part of the site was much richer in artifactual material. However, only one adult burial in a refuse pit was encountered during the 1968 excavation.

Fifteen storage or refuse pits were excavated, ranging from 1½ to 3 feet in diameter and from 1 to over 4 feet in depth. All were cylindrical and contained varying amounts of bone and shell refuse, flint debitage, and artifact material. Pit 11 contained approximately 300 carbonized ears of corn which have been analyzed by Hugh Cutler and Leonard Blake (1971).

In unit O-4 there was a unique "urn burial". The bones of a human fetus were found in a small vessel buried upside down immediately beneath the surface. The bottom of the vessel had been removed, presumably by plowing.

The jar, about 5 inches in diameter, had four angular castellations and a crudely trailed zig-zag motif around the rim.

No stratigraphy existed in the units excavated in 1968. The plow zone yielded relatively little material and features were usually discernible within 3 inches of the surface. Nonetheless, the material recovered leaves little doubt that the site is multicomponent. Ceramic samples from individual refuse pits were remarkably heterogeneous; it is surmised that considerable amounts of earlier material were accidentally thrown into relatively late refuse pits. This idea is at least partially confirmed by the radiocarbon date of 300 ± 100 radiocarbon years: A.D. 1650 (M-2271), available from Pit 1. This pit contained not only the late Whittlesey vessel illustrated in Figure 1-A but also sherds of Reeve Horizontal, a type believed to be somewhat earlier.

On the basis of ceramic assemblages from the Whittlesey sites of Cuyahoga and Lake counties and comparable material from New York, Michigan, and Ontario, it seems probable that at least four distinct components are represented at South Park (Table I).

The rare dentate and tool impressed rim sherds from South Park bear a remarkable resemblance to Glen Meyer Branch ceramics from Ontario. Two motifs in particular, illustrated by Wright (1966: Pl. 10) from the Goessens, Stafford, and Woodsmen sites, are nearly identical with South Park sherds. One motif consists of diagonal plats of short oblique linear stamping, the other, of several horizontal rows of short oblique linear stamping or tool impressions. The latter resembles some sherds of the tentative type Mixer Tool Impressed (Shane 1967: 156-58). Mixer Tool Impressed is definitely known from an early Late Woodland component on the east side of the Cuyahoga River at the Carey Farm site and is abundant at the Libben site, Ottawa County (O.H. Prufer, O.C. Shane, personal communication).

The simple stamped vessel illustrated in Figure 1-E and an unfigured sherd bear a ver-

tical dentate pattern that may be related to Vase Dentate from southern Michigan. However, simple stamping seems to be rare in the Late Woodland of Michigan. The Staffordsite, Ontario, yielded simple stamped vessels with dentate rims similar to the South Park specimen. This material, scanty though it is, strongly suggests an Early Late Woodland component at South Park, dating around A.D. 1100-1200, contemporaneous with Fitting's Younger Tradition and Wright's "Early Ontario Iroquois."

There are three rim sherd types which, although rare at South Park, indicate a relationship with Lake County "Whittlesey" sites such as Reeve and Fairport Harbor. These types are Reeve Horizontal, Reeve Filleted, and Parker Festooned, believed to date around A.D. 1300-1400. Parker Festooned, originally described from the Parker Earthworks, Ontario, occurs at a Michigan site radiocarbon dated at A.D. 1320 \pm 100 (Fitting 1966:738). The Reeve types seem to be closely related to Neutral-Erie ceramic types from southern Ontario (MacNeish 1952; Wright 1966), notably Ontario Horizontal. White (1961) has found similar material in western New York (Kienuka, Oakfield sites). The dearth of such sherds on Ohio sites away from the northeastern lake shore is significant. Initially, I believed that the Reeve rim sherd forms represented a phase considerably older (around A.D. 1300) than the typical Whittlesey type Tuttle Hill Notched, and I still do, but the possibility that they may represent a distinct phase at least partly contemporaneous with the Cuyahoga Valley Whittlesey Phase cannot be dismissed. One slight piece of independent evidence for the age of the Reeve site comes from examination of Reeve maize by Cutler and Blake (1971), indicating a pre-1300 date for Reeve and a post-1300 date for the major occupation at South Park.

Diagonally-incised sherds representative of Reeve or McFate Incised are as rare at South Park as Reeve Horizontal and Reeve Filleted. The abundance of such incised rims at the Lyman site east of Painesville (38.3%) suggests a close tie with western Pennsylvanian sites such as Wilson Shutes and McFate. These sites, which have been somewhat uncomfortably fitted into the Monongahela Complex, seem to lack both Reeve Horizontal and Reeve Filleted sherds on the one hand and the fil-

leted Tuttle Hill Notched and Fairport Filleted on the other. On the basis of a few rare untyped sherds at the Lyman site, sherds which have been duplicated at South Park (Figure 1-D), it is believed that the major Lyman occupation is a "Monongahela Complex" component contemporaneous with the later Whittlesey Phase component at South Park. These occupations are guess-dated as post-1400, comparable to the Lawson site in Ontario for which Wright has suggested an A.D. 1550 date. Significantly, an unquestionable sherd of Lawson Opposed has been found at the Lyman site (Dennis Dodd collection).

The dominant ceramic type at South Park is Tuttle Hill Notched characterized by a narrow but distinct collar which is notched along the lower edge and by frequent notching along the lip. Such rims occur on cordmarked, simple stamped, and smoothed vessels with both grit and shell tempering. Considerable variation is shown in the treatment of individual rims, and it is suspected that some of these varieties will prove to have temporal significance. The rim in Figure 2-E, for example, is reminiscent of Lawson Incised. The large shell tempered storage vessel with subconoidal base (Figure 1-A) has a rim much like some late Fort Ancient Madisonville Phase pots, though the vessel form is atypical of Fort Ancient. This vessel came from Pit 1 with a radiocarbon date of A.D. 1650. Like many of the other Tuttle Hill Notched vessels, it has vertical finger impressions along the smoothed rim and neck area, one of the most striking characters of this late Whittlesey ware. An excellent example of Tuttle Hill Notched, nearly identical with this vessel except for size and shape, is illustrated by Griffin (1943: Plate 134) from the vicinity of Zanesville, Muskingum County. Grit-tempered South Park vessels with strongly notched lips (Figure 1-B, C) especially resemble sherds from the Riker site, Tuscarawas County.

The weakly filleted grit-tempered sherd illustrated in Figure 2-F is unlike any others recovered from the site and probably should not be included in Tuttle Hill Notched. It more closely resembles the type Fairport Filleted, which is believed to be earlier than most of the other Whittlesey ceramic types.

The Tuttle Hill Notched sherds reminiscent of Madisonville and Riker material are believed to represent the latest occupation at South Park, that responsible for the bulk of

the refuse pits excavated by the 1968 crew. The occupation dates perhaps well into the late 1500's to become terminal Whittlesey. Although no trade goods have been found at South Park, it is believed that the site may have been occupied as late as 1600.

To conclude, it may be noted that the bulk of later Whittlesey ceramics display affinities with Fort Ancient as well as with Ontario or New York Iroquois. The only distinctively Iroquoian feature seems to be the presence of low angular castellations on many of the vessels. Too much can be made of the presence of multiple horizontal incising, which occurs in the early Fort Ancient Baum Phase at Blain valley, and the notched added rimstrip. Every horizontally incised sherd need not represent "Ontario Horizontal." And no less a student than Boas (1927:139) has recognized that the filleted rim strip is of very wide occurrence. Not to range too far afield, it may be found in Tennessee, at Fox Farm and Larkin, Fort Ancient components in Kentucky, as well as in Ohio Fort Ancient components. Of course it is also possible to over-emphasize the Mississippian elements of late Whittlesey ceramics. I certainly would not include the Whittlesey Phase within the Fort Ancient Tradition, though this suggestion has been made to me. It seems better to recognize these Late Prehistoric sites of the Cuyahoga Valley and the Lake Shore as representative of a distinct, as yet unnamed, tradition of which only the relatively late Whittlesey Phase is as yet at all well known.

Paradoxically, of the four components distinguished at South Park, it is the earliest and least represented that is the most firmly established. The Glen Meyer-like ceramics are so distinctive as to permit little doubt about their identity and relationships. The Reeve pottery types and McFate Incised are distinctive enough as types, but their relationships to ceramics of other areas must remain hypothetical until more data becomes available. Nor are the spatial and temporal dimensions of the latest component at the site – that marked by Tuttle Hill Notched – as well understood. Tuttle Hill Notched may have covered a rather broad time span from 1300 to near 1600; if so, the internal variation upon which further subdivisions may be based is not adequately known, nor will it be known until considerably more excavation work is

performed at South Park and at numerous other "Whittlesey Focus" sites.

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Table I: South Park Ceramics

	Surface	1	2	3	4	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14
Body sherds													
Grit-tempered													
cordmarked	669	166	52	13	16	22	12	80	2	29	65	2	2
simple stamped	63	30	2	19	3	8	3	11			14		
smoothed	124	33	5	3	3	3				2	7		
Shell-tempered													
cordmarked	119	34		12	15	20	11	5		4	12	1	15
simple stamped	38	2		3	2	7	1	4			4		
smoothed	20				3	3				2			
Tuttle Hill Notched													
Grit-tempered													
notched lip	3	3										2	
plain lip	13	1				1	1	2		3		5	
lip not preserved				1			1	2		1		2	
Shell-tempered													
notched lip	1	1										2	
plain lip	2	2								1			
Reeve Filleted													
Grit-tempered				1		4							
Reeve Horizontal													
Grit-tempered	4	2											
McFate Incised													
Grit-tempered													
cordmarked lip				2	1							1	
incised lip							2						
Cordmarked rims													
Grit-tempered													
incised lip	4												
plain lip	2			1						1			
Shell-tempered													
plain lip	2								1				
Smoothed rims													
Grit-tempered													
notched or incised lip	5									1		2	
plain lip	2				1	1						1	
Shell-tempered													
notched or incised lip		1											
plain lip		1											
Mixer Tool Impressed													
Grit-tempered	5				2								
Misc. "stab and drag"													
Grit-tempered	2			2									
Shell-tempered	1				1								
Misc. dentate rims													
Grit-tempered						3							
Shell-tempered							2						
Obliquely dentate rims													
Grit-tempered								1					

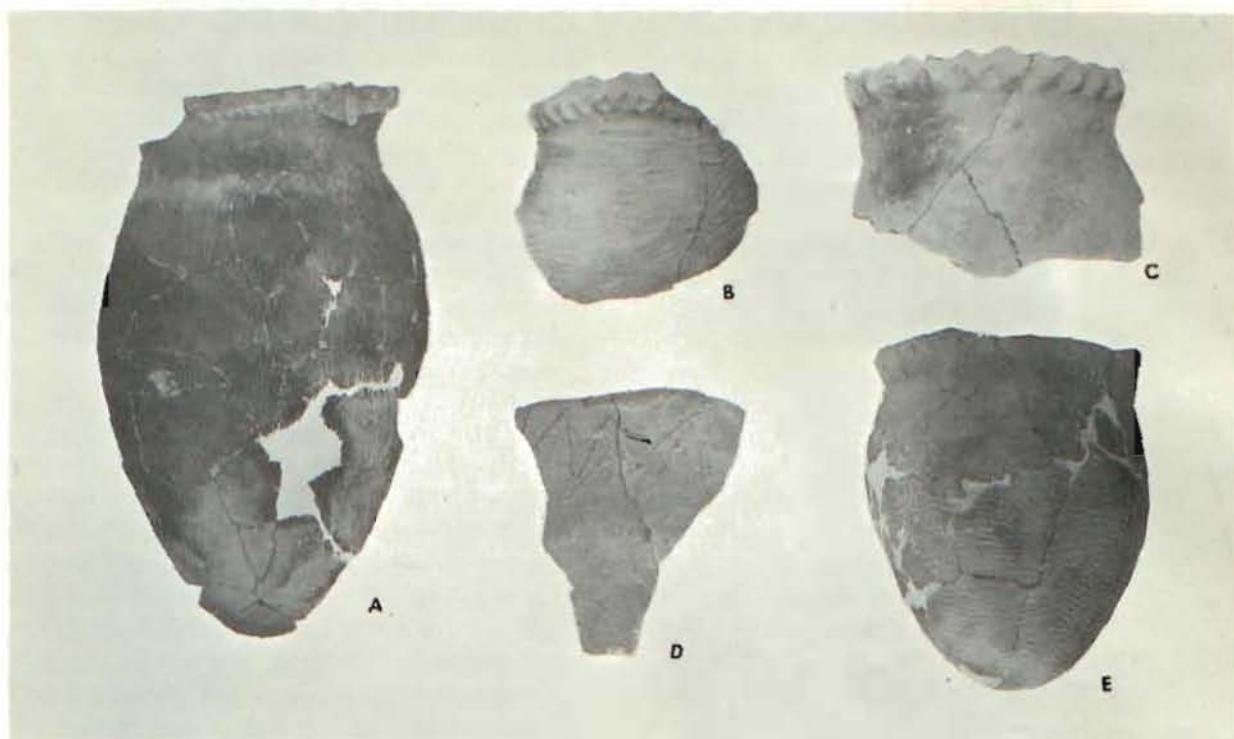


Fig. 1 (Murphy)

A-C. Three Tuttle Hill Notched vessels. A x 1/5; B x 1/3; C approximately x 1/5

D. Untyped shell-tempered sherd with crudely trained zig-zag motif, identical with sherd from

Lyman site. Approximately x 1.
E. Simple-stamped vessel with vertical dentate rim motif and vertical lug handles. Approximately x 1/8.

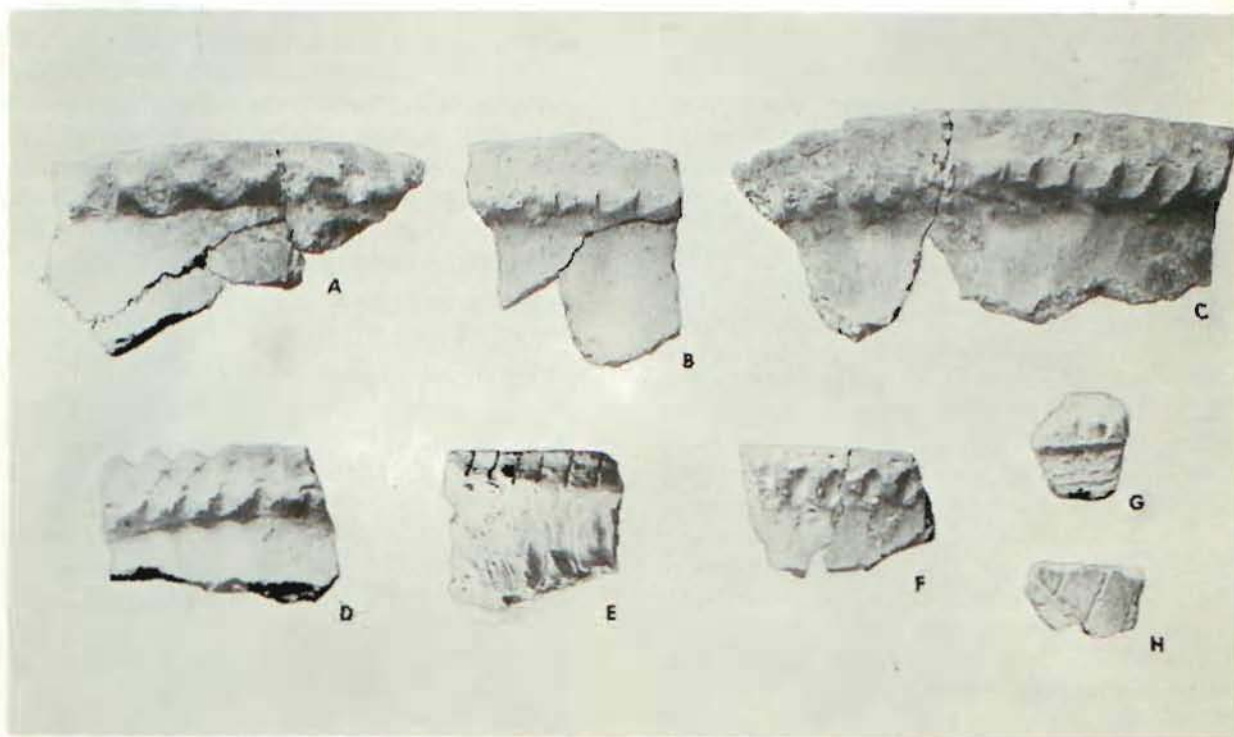


Fig. 2 (Murphy)

A-E. Varieties of Tuttle Hill Notched.

F. Aberrant rim similar to Fairport Filleted.

G. Reeve Filleted Sherd from Pit 1.

H. McFate Incised sherd.

All illustrations x 0.6